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Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2016, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its seventy-first session the item entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item, held a general debate and took action on the item at its 18th meeting, on 28 October 2016 (see A/C.4/71/SR.18).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/71/46).

4. At the 18th meeting, on 28 October, the representative of Japan, in his capacity as Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, made a statement on the work of the Committee (see A/C.4/71/SR.18).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.5

5. At the 18th meeting, on 28 October, the representative of Japan, on behalf of Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States of America, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Effects of atomic radiation" (A/C.4/71/L.5).

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Subsequently, Peru, the Russian Federation, Spain and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

6. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

7. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.5 without a vote (see para. 8).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which humankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on humankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Acknowledging the concerns about the radiological consequences of nuclear accidents,

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work, and welcoming the increased commitment of States members of the Committee,

Emphasizing the vital need for sufficient, assured and predictable funding, as well as efficient management, of the work of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to arrange the annual sessions and coordinate the development of documents based on scientific reviews of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment,

Recognizing the increasing importance of the scientific work of the Scientific Committee and the need to carry out unforeseen additional work, such as after the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station,

Considering that the high quality of the work and the scientific rigour of the Scientific Committee need to be maintained in the future,

Recognizing the importance of disseminating the findings of the Scientific Committee, in particular to the public, and widely publicizing scientific knowledge about atomic radiation, and recalling in that context principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[1]

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

Noting the desirability that the resources of the Scientific Committee be sufficient, assured and predictable, and recognizing the importance of voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to support the work of the Committee,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution that it has been making since its inception to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgment;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

3. *Notes with appreciation* the work of the Scientific Committee, and takes note of the report on its sixty-third session,[2] including the consideration of its long-term strategic directions, and encourages the Committee, over its coming sessions, to work towards implementing strategies to support its efforts to serve the scientific community as well as wider audiences;

4. *Appreciates* that the Scientific Committee has made arrangements for activities to follow up on its 2013 evaluation of the levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami, such as the systematic review of scientific information that has been published since the completion of the Committee's evaluation,[3] welcomes the publication of the second review, and encourages the secretariat of the Committee to disseminate the findings of the Committee's systematic reviews, in particular, to the public;

5. *Welcomes* the four substantive scientific evaluations completed by the Scientific Committee during its sixty-third session, as presented in its report, notes with appreciation the Committee's reports on the methodology for estimating public exposures due to radioactive discharges, on radiation exposures from electricity generation and on biological effects of selected internal emitters (tritium and radioisotopes of uranium),[4] and looks forward to the publication of the supporting scientific annexes thereto;

6. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session;

7. *Supports* the intentions and plans of the Scientific Committee for conducting its programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, in particular its next periodic global surveys of radiation exposure, to be conducted in close cooperation with other relevant organizations, and requests the Committee to submit plans for its ongoing and future programme of work to the Assembly at its seventy-second session;

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[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/71/46).

[3] Ibid., chap. II, sect. B.

[4] Ibid., chap. III.

8. *Welcomes* developments in streamlining procedures for publishing the reports of the Scientific Committee electronically on its official website and as sales publications, and calls upon the secretariat to monitor the timely publication of those reports and to continue to strive to publish them within the same calendar year as their approval;

9. *Re-emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report can reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

10. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the secretariat to facilitate such consultations;

11. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the levels and effects of ionizing radiation, and invites the Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

12. *Recalls* the strategy of the Scientific Committee to improve data collection, encourages in this regard Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about levels, effects and risks of radiation exposure from various sources, which would greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Committee to the General Assembly, and encourages the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and other relevant organizations to further collaborate with the secretariat on arrangements for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on radiation exposures of patients, workers and the public;

13. *Welcomes* the use and ongoing development by the secretariat of an online platform for collecting data on medical exposures, encourages Member States to take part in the Scientific Committee's global surveys of radiation exposure, and also encourages Member States to nominate a national contact person to facilitate coordination of the collection and submission of data on exposures of patients, workers and the public within their country;

14. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue, within existing resources, to actively support the effective conduct of the work of the Scientific Committee and the dissemination of its findings to Member States, the scientific community and the public;

15. *Takes note*, in this regard, of the Scientific Committee's outreach strategy for the coming years, in particular the enhancement of the website of the Committee and the publication of informative leaflets and posters in all the official languages of the United Nations, and continues to encourage that consideration be given to publishing the website in all of those languages;

16. *Encourages* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to maintain appropriate funding for the Scientific Committee, pursuant to paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 70/81 of 9 December 2015;

17. *Encourages* Member States to make voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and also to make contributions in kind, in order to support the work of the Scientific Committee, and the dissemination of its findings, in a sustainable manner;

18. *Recalls* paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 66/70 of 9 December 2011, notes the expression of interest by Member States in membership in the Scientific Committee, and requests the Secretary-General to provide the Assembly at its seventy-second session with a list of the Member States that have expressed their particular interest in membership in the Committee by 11 September 2017, for consideration for membership pursuant to the above-mentioned paragraph.